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POISONING BY OPIUM.

CASE OF SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT BY FLAGELLATION, WHERE A LARGE DOSE OF
LAUDANUM HAD BEEN TAKEN.

BY JOSEPH BARRATT, M.D. OF MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

TINCTURE of Opium is not unfrequently resorted to, for the destruction of life. It is also unfortunately, and too frequently, taken by mistake, and proves fatal before efficient means can be adopted to counteract its deleterious effects on the system. I am induced, therefore, to offer a short statement of a case of poisoning with laudanum, that fell under my care, several years since, for the following reasons: *First*, the success that attended the mode of practice pursued; and, *Second*, from not having met with any such means recorded, to my knowledge, either in works on medicine, or treatises on poisons.

In the year 1822, February 23rd, I was called to see Mr. Wright Harris (this was in the State of New York), who had intentionally taken a large dose of laudanum, for the purpose of destroying himself. He had committed this act during his absence from home, under circumstances which it is not important here to relate. Much time, about three hours, was therefore lost, before any effectual measures could be adopted for his relief. His case, as I found him, appeared altogether hopeless. Before my arrival, emetics and various drinks had been tried, besides frictions, and constant though ineffectual attempts had been made to irritate the œsophagus, by feathers. All these means had failed, and the patient was in such a profound sopor, that apparently nothing but warmth remained, to indicate that life had not already become extinct. The quantity of laudanum taken was ascertained to be one ounce and a half. This dose has proved fatal, as appears by reference to M. Barruel's case, Paris—see Christison on Poisons, page 526, &c. He had also taken some ardent spirits,* and from the absence of solid food in the stomach, this would only serve to hasten the operation of the poison into the circulating system. The case, appearing so desperate, justified me in the course of treatment which I was, under existing circumstances, then obliged to adopt.

Internal remedies having entirely failed, there was no chance left but for high external excitements. I therefore determined to use vigorous measures. I commenced with flagellations, using long, pliant fresh twigs,

* He was not, I believe, addicted to take much spirits; he was what would be now termed a "moderate drinker."

to the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. These were briskly applied, and in a short time gave indications of uneasiness and pain. This treatment was unremittingly pursued till the man spoke, and complained of being pained by the whipping, when this severe appliance was relaxed; but on so doing, he instantly sunk into a profound stupor, from which he was again only roused by the severity of whipping.

It required the aid of a number of men to take turns in the flagellation, as well as to support and walk him about; for a cessation of the use of the rods was followed by instantaneous stupor. After about six or eight hours, under this course, the stupor was lessened, and the severity of the flagellation was mitigated; but as the case required constant high excitement, it was still repeated, at intervals, till eventually the exercise of walking was sufficient to keep him awake. This was in about twelve hours after commencing with the flagellation. The following day he was sleepy, and complained somewhat of a sense of smarting in his hands and feet (though they were not blistered!). In permitting him to rest, care was taken to wake him at intervals, till such time as was considered safe to allow him more repose; some light refreshment was then eaten, and castor oil administered. He afterwards experienced but little inconvenience from his hands and feet, and was perfectly restored, in a few days, to his usual health.

I would here state that the first proposal made by me to adopt flagellation, as the only hope, was objected to by the persons present, from its carrying with it the semblance of unkindness towards what was regarded by them as a corpse; and it was not till the appliance of the rods by myself, in the first instance, that I obtained the aid of those present; but so soon as the patient began to move, and at last spoke! they took hold with alacrity, and by dividing themselves into relief parties, they very cheerfully, and rather amusingly, kept up the castigation, so long as the state of the patient required it of their hands. He by no means appeared to relish this harsh procedure, and in return gave his attendants several severe blows. If while lifting his arm to strike a blow, the flagellation was then entirely suspended, the arm would instantly sink powerless; to such a degree had the effects of the narcotic drug prevailed over the nervous system, that nothing but the torture of the rods could rouse him. On his recovery, it was said that the man's wife was highly satisfied with this remedial course, which was believed to have had a good moral effect upon his subsequent conduct.

It is now several years since this case of poisoning occurred, and yet I do not meet with any account, or similar directions, or practice, in works on medicine, or treatises on toxology within my reach. The very valuable treatise on poisons, by Robert Christison, M.D. Professor of Medical Jurisprudence in the University of Edinburgh, 1829, is a work that displays great research, and though very full on the article of opium (pages 514—549), yet no hint is there given of such a resource or mode of treatment. I would also take occasion to cite another high authority. Sir Astley Cooper—where we might have expected some such efficient course being suggested—speaking of opium, when taken in poisonous doses, says—see lectures (taken in short hand), London edition, 1829,

p. 454—"No stimulating substance will produce the least effect upon it (the œsophagus). I sat hour after hour, with a young lady, watching her progress to dissolution, without being in the least able to prevent it;" and then speaks of the stomach pump, as a most valuable instrument, &c. How many cases are there that occur, where no such instrument can be obtained; and it would be entirely useless in a case similar the one I have described, where so much time had elapsed in abortive efforts. The stomach pump, valuable as it is, cannot be had in many places: but in making public such a course as just related, the remedy would be available to every one; and might be the means of preserving many valuable lives.

April 19, 1836.

THE GRAHAM SYSTEM.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—I have for some time looked at the contest now going on in your Journal, in regard to Grahamism, in silence; first, for want of time to enter upon discussions of this kind; secondly, because I have, until recently, seen nothing but the communication and supposed *facts*, said to be from Dr. Lee, of Charlestown, which seemed to me worthy of a serious reply; and thirdly, because all who have yet entered the lists against Mr. G., while they appear to be sincere, and to reason very well in some respects, are so exceedingly lame in others, that I am forced to conclude their prejudice or their *INSANITY* will be likely to shut the door to their conviction of error, even if I could be so fortunate as to prove, in the common manner, that they are wrong. Above all this, I knew that Mr. Graham had evidence that the *facts* of Dr. Lee—to say nothing of his reasonings—were some of them *false* facts, and I supposed this evidence would be published. But either on account of Mr. G.'s other engagements, or because he cannot gain access to space enough in the columns of your Journal, or for some other reason or reasons, that evidence seems to be slow in making its appearance; and in the mean time I have concluded to take up my pen and present a few thoughts.

The article signed W*. W*. in the Journal of April 20, has also roused me to the necessity of speaking. For here are statements and a number of cases, which will appear, to a portion of the community, as strong, or nearly so, as those of Dr. Lee. I say such will be the result to a portion of readers. I mean to the careless, the ignorant, and the prejudiced. For with the careful, the intelligent, or the liberal reader, can such a communication have much weight? Will he even trust much in a few loose statements of *facts*, from a man whose general reasoning is so loose? Or rather can he put *any* confidence in a writer, who, while he raves against Grahamism as a cause of insanity, gives us such a tissue of mere dogmatisms as a sane man, in a cause which he believes to be righteous, ought to be ashamed of?

Where is the evidence that Mr. G. "forbids flesh to man in every season and climate," even when it would save him from starvation?

Where is the evidence that "when a man accustomed to a generous mixed diet, suddenly puts himself upon a spare vegetable regimen, a large amount of nervous energy, before directed to the viscera, is suddenly set at liberty, and may be concentrated in the brain or muscles, and thus capacitate the individual for extraordinary efforts for a limited period?" These are some of W*. W*'s positions, if I understand him; and I am the more amused with the last, because he seems to admit—a part of the time—that the concentration of nervous energy, of which he speaks, has exactly the contrary tendency. Surely so wise a man ought not to involve himself in contradictions.

But where is the proof that Mr. G. recommends to his disciples a "spare" (if by spare is meant *scanty*) vegetable diet? Where is the proof that he encourages any cheating of the stomach?—Fraud to the stomach! How? Admitting Mr. G. were to restrict his disciples to bread, will it be denied that bread is one of the most nutritious substances in nature? Who can cheat his stomach as long as he gives it good bread enough? Ridiculous! positively so.

Where is the proof that "emasculatation is the first fruit of Grahamic fanaticism?" Is it in point to cite John Wesley's case, when Ireland can produce millions of potatoe eaters, who propagate—to say the least of them—vigorous bodies? How can a man who has ever considered, for one moment, the condition of millions of laborers in Ireland, Germany, Poland, Sweden, and other *northern* nations of Europe, have the effrontery to stand up before the world in a respectable Journal and say that "none but the most vigorous can endure, for many years, extraordinary exertions and a bread and water diet?"

Lastly, I would like to inquire of W*. W*. whether the vegetable eating millions of northern and middle Europe—saying nothing, again, of those of hot climates—are particularly subject to insanity; and if not, why this should happen, admitting the truth of his principles.

I will not now take up W*. W*'s cases, although, as I have already stated, they appear to me so loose and so obviously inconclusive, that they cannot with thinking men have much weight. Indeed I begin to feel ashamed that I took up pen at all. But the truth is, that when I began to write, I thought the article of W*. W*. had at least the appearance of candor and sincerity. The more I look at it, however, the more weak it appears; and I most earnestly hope, for the honor of an honorable profession, that if the writer continues to vent his spleen in this manner, he will remain incognito.

One word more, Mr. Editor, and I have done for the present. I have studied man, as a common student of nature, thirty years; and as a physiologist, about half as long. I have seen great numbers of vegetable eaters, and watched their progress from childhood to middle age. I have seen sudden changes from animal to vegetable food exclusively, and watched the effects for two, four, and six years. I have watched these effects, too, as a professional observer, and not in so limited a sphere as some might suppose.—I abstained suddenly, about six years ago, from animal food, and from all fermented, narcotic, and alcoholic drinks; and have confined myself, to this hour, to vegetable food and water; and this,

too, amid great labor and fatigue of body and mind. I have moreover done it not only without loss, but, in the judgment of some who know me, with great gain. Whether I am tending to insanity, I leave to the public to decide.

WM. A. ALCOTT.

Boston, April 29, 1836.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PATHOLOGY.

BY LUTHER V. BELL, M.D. OF DERRY, NEW HAMPSHIRE.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.—Continued from p. 64.]

In my little work on Smallpox, &c. I have detailed a considerable number of facts, deduced from personal experience in this disease, as it has prevailed amidst the sparse population of the country—a situation peculiarly adapted for the investigation of the degree of communicability, period of incubation, co-existence, or separate appearance of variola and varicella, and several other interesting points in this class of diseases. Some other, to me at least, original observations have presented themselves, which being without the range of topics there referred to, I beg leave to offer to the consideration of the profession in this Journal.

XI.—In about seventy cases of various forms and degrees of smallpox which I attended within the year ending in May, 1835, the number of deaths was eleven. Of these, only two were persons whose habits, as respects the use of ardent spirits, were temperate. One of these was a child three weeks old, seen late in the disease; the other a young woman of eighteen, who died on the 27th or 28th day of the eruption, from pulmonary inflammation, the sequela of the disease, rather than from smallpox itself. Such was the destruction of the cutaneous structure in this case, that the entire tegument of the nose separated in one mask-like shape.

As a striking illustration of the indomitable nature of the propensity for stimulating drinks, it may be mentioned that most of these individuals who fell victims, were admonished daily and urgently of the inevitable fate which awaited them if they persisted in stimulation. Unappalled by the warning, or the still more fearful example of sickness and death around them, they did persist; continued to obtain spirit clandestinely, and cider by force and trespass, and were destroyed, as had been too certainly predicted.

The occasion of a fatal result in these subjects was manifold and obvious. The cutaneous capillary circulation, from their habits, was so unnaturally increased, that the eruption was uniformly very heavy, generally confluent; the nervous system was so deranged that the irritability and constitutional sympathy were prodigiously augmented; the recuperative forces of the system seemed nearly annihilated—the pustules never filled, but remained flat and lividly discolored; those on the face never emerging from the deep erysipelatous red which eventually gave place to a general pallid hue. In short, the primary violence and subsequent prostration and malignancy were incomparably more marked than in even

the fatal confluent forms I had in former years witnessed. In no malady, after having been in the habit of witnessing disease for near ten years, and part of that period pretty extensively, have I seen the injurious influences of ardent spirit so strikingly illustrated as in smallpox.

XII.—Consequent upon the general vaccinations, which, as if to illustrate an ancient proverb, have been customary *after* the irruption of smallpox in a neighborhood, a kind of cutaneous eruption has been repeatedly noticed, which proved very obstinate and troublesome. Can the experienced editor of this Journal, or any of his correspondents, if they ever have noticed such circumstance, give an explanation? A large portion of those vaccinated at Candia, N. H. and its vicinity, last year, presented this unpleasant result, though the virus employed was from various sources, and in part, at least, as I was credibly informed, taken from young children who never before or after labored under any cutaneous affection. I also noticed this the year before, at Londonderry, N. H. where I was engaged. Is it a modification of, or something appertaining to, the vaccine disease, or is it the result of an inoculation of a virus of its own? It is evidently not contagious by contact, like psora, which in some other characteristics it resembles.

XIII.—A young man of Candia, named Bean Smith, who had never been vaccinated, was exposed to a case of confluent smallpox for a number of days; was then vaccinated, and, as is common whilst in a variolous atmosphere, was found insusceptible to the vaccine virus on repeated insertions. In about eighteen days, he was seized with all the usual premonitory symptoms of smallpox, coldness of the hands and feet, lumbar pains, &c. &c. as well marked as are ever witnessed. No doubt was felt but that he was about to have the disease in the natural way. After these constitutional symptoms had prevailed for about the usual period, before an eruption in the ordinary course should have made its appearance, they subsided without a single papula, vesicle or pustule. The vaccination never *took*, nor did he afterwards have any disease, though he continued to be exposed for weeks to a highly infected atmosphere. Are we not justified, under all the circumstances of this case, in the belief that the disease went, as it were, silently through his system? As we know that a single pustule only is sometimes produced after variolous inoculation, the entire absence of the cutaneous eruption is not impossible, though I have not found any similar circumstance on record.

XIV.—How long will the contagion of smallpox exist under the most favorable circumstances in which the *fomites* can be placed? You have succeeded, Mr. Editor, in continuing the vaccine virus to a length of time before unknown, I believe, in the instance in a late editorial notice, but this period is comparatively short contrasted with the variolous infection. That it exists for more than one year is evident from the fact of the European rags being its nucleus, or rather nidus, in repeated epidemics. I have been informed, by an accurate and credible authority, of an instance in which the hearth-stone of an old house, used some 20 years previous as an inoculating hospital, was removed, and from that source the smallpox commenced. In a letter with which I have been lately honored from the distinguished gentleman, known, I believe, to

your readers under the signature of "W." amongst several interesting facts relative to variolous diseases, of which I hope, hereafter, to take advantage, he gives the following case. "I was riding with a medical friend in the county of Dutchess, N. Y. On passing the ruins of a small house, he remarked that the dwelling had been used as a smallpox hospital some fifteen or eighteen years before; a number of men had the season previous been employed in taking it down; three of whom, if I recollect rightly, were attacked with the smallpox."

April, 1836.

[To be continued.]

CUT THE KNOT.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—Alexander said, that it answered just as well to cut the Gordian knot, as to untie it. I think it was much the better course. If he had attempted to unravel all its intricacies, he would probably have got into a worse snarl than the knot itself. In many things, it is a much wiser course to cut the knot at once, than to puzzle ourselves in attempting to untie it. This rule, perhaps, will apply to every case of barefaced absurdity. After Hahnemann has so far diluted a medicine, that an ounce of the fluid does not probably contain a duodecillionth part of a drop, he cautions against shaking the vial containing the article too much, lest his remedy should become too strong and active! Here, I instantly cut the knot, because common sense declares Hahnemann to be either dishonest or insane. If we do not take this summary course, but allow ourselves to be led by him through all his mysterious mazes, we shall soon be liable to be so perplexed as to become dishonest or insane ourselves. No, I say, *obsta principiis*, the moment that we meet with a palpable absurdity.

Ultraism of every sort, if not a species of dishonesty, is a kind of mania *quoad hoc*, that is best met, and most surely put down, by cutting the knot. In fact, it is often unsafe to dispute it, as we are liable to become ourselves so excited as to run into the opposite extreme, and attempt to put out fire by fire. Whenever we hear, therefore, a man who pretends to be a christian, dispute the propriety of eating animal food, or the lawfulness of drinking wine at a wedding, or of employing it in the eucharist, we are certain that, in these particulars, he is either dishonest or insane. Time is worse than lost in discussing such questions, and in attempting to disentangle them from the sophistry by which they are maintained, in opposition to scripture and common sense.

The same principle applies to every description of juggling. It is enough for us to know that it is a farce; and it is not necessary to pry into the legerdemain by which the illusion is produced. When it is asserted, and even proved, that a person *appears* to be able to see an object through the back of his head, to read through an opaque substance, or to reveal secrets which have never been communicated to him, it is much the preferable way to declare, at once, that there is a gross im-

sition. In all these cases, and many others of the kind, if we do not instantly cut the knot, we are in the end very apt to be duped ourselves.

In general, it is probably the best method to take for granted that the phenomena have *apparently* existed. It is impossible to say to what extent illusion may be carried. If we begin by doubting or denying the accuracy of the statement, with respect to the mysterious appearances, we are very likely to be overwhelmed by testimony, and find that they unquestionably appeared to be real. In perceiving ourselves mistaken upon this point, we become confounded, and are prepared to consider that a new law in nature has been discovered. As in attempted seduction, "she who deliberates is lost," so it is often equally dangerous to tamper with an unphilosophical phenomenon. It is enough to perceive that it is unphilosophical, and it is scarcely worth while to endeavor to discover in what the delusion consists, or how the wires of the puppet-show are managed.

We fancy ourselves to be living in the most rational and philosophical age of the world, and yet, perhaps, mankind were never more liable to be gulled than at the present day. Almost everything is attempted to be carried by enlisting the feelings and passions. Sober reason seems to be too cool and tame, and little is esteemed that does not produce excitement. To catch the attention, therefore, we must have something strange, marvellous, or mysterious, something which is opposed to the experience and philosophy of common sense. Controversy is itself a great source of excitement, and generally the authors and diffusers of absurdity, upon this principle, are pleased when they produce a polemic contest. It makes them known, and by effecting an excitement, they are pretty sure to make converts. If we would simply cut the knot, by declaring their vagaries to be absurd, and then let them alone, they would soon fall of themselves. A system that has been built up in opposition to reason, cannot be pulled down by a process of reasoning. Its abettor, when he is honest, is so far a monomaniac, and must be treated upon the same principles, as those by which analogous species of insanity are cured, if he can ever be expected to recover from his delusion.

In many cases it is the best course, in fact it is the only proper way, to cut the knot at once, or perhaps to let it entirely alone, without perplexing ourselves in attempting to unravel its intricacies. It is always unprofitable to dispute with a man who is in a passion, since it is sure to make no good impression on him; and it is dangerous for us, because we are liable to become angry on our part, and thus expose a good cause by throwing ourselves in the wrong. We are frequently in the same danger, when we attempt to refute any philosophical, moral, or religious absurdity. If we have mildness, calmness, and address enough, to catch the attention of the victim of absurdity, we may possibly teach him, and lead him gradually into the right way, so that his hallucination may leave him of course; but we can never expect to remove his delusion by a direct process of argumentation.

Most of the proselytes to every description of fanaticism are ensnared before they are aware of their danger. Having itching ears, as a matter of curiosity, they put themselves voluntarily in the way of being cheated

out of their rational faculties. It is difficult to remain long in the region of mystery, without being enveloped in its fog. An eminent physician once said, that he went to see the evil spirit, and behold it appeared. In other words, he supposed he was going to see a delusion, and yet it run away with him, and for the time being he mistook it for a reality. In popular language, the magician *casts a mist* over the eyes of his spectators, and then easily leads them to credit any absurdity he pleases.

The same principles apply, whether the delusion is epidemic, endemic, or sporadic. By coming in contact with it, if it is listened to seriously, either as a matter of curiosity, or to detect it, or to confute it, it is very apt to become contagious. The best rule is, *leave off contention before it be meddled with*, or to observe the injunction, *touch not, taste not, handle not*. As we have not created the delusion, we are not bound to follow it in all its ramifications. If it is obvious that imposition exists somewhere, it is generally useless for us to endeavor to trace it through all its windings.

There is no doubt that a well-informed and well-balanced mind may find many things useful that are blended with the most extensive systems of absurdity, though the two grains of wheat may scarcely repay for winnowing the two bushels of chaff. In Hahnemann's *Organon*, his preliminary remarks upon the fashionable European practice of physic, contain very many excellent ideas, which ought to be forcibly impressed upon every practitioner. But for readers in general, the truth interspersed in the work makes it so much the more dangerous, as they are apt to acquire such an interest, as scarcely to allow themselves to imagine that an author, who says so much which is valuable, could possibly be guilty of the most palpable absurdity. A popular work upon dietetics, which has turned the heads and injured the stomachs of so many of the faculties and students of our literary institutions, is very well worth the perusal of the intelligent physician. The great difficulty is, that most readers cannot separate the wheat from the chaff; or rather they, with the author, mistake exceptions for general rules, and consider what may be proper for individuals, as principles of universal application.

A general plan of living can never be a very bad one, where, as in New England, one in seven, perhaps one in six, of all persons that are born, lives to seventy years, and where, in the whole population, the ratio of annual mortality is somewhere between one in fifty and one in seventy. Surely, in such cases, much circumspection is necessary before adopting any great and sudden change.

We can hardly be on safe ground, when listening patiently to a palpable absurdity, or when we voluntarily countenance it by our presence. The injunction, *prove all things, hold fast that which is good*, like most other general propositions, has its exceptions, limitations, and qualifications. It can never be construed to mean, that we should attempt to prove, or try, that which is positively wrong.

That which is marvellous, mysterious, or strange, always catches the vulgar, whose taste is more gratified by the farce, than by the dramatic representation which is faithful to nature. Men of cultivated minds should get the better of this propensity to trickery and juggling. Besides

not countenancing it by their presence, they ought not, generally, to dignify it by combating it with serious argument. Periodicals designed to convey information, and to lead the public taste, should perhaps slightly notice current absurdities, as a matter of record; but they ought to beware how they contribute to diffuse them, under the deceptive appearance of candor to all parties. The story of the thief, who took his first lesson in stealing, from his minister's minute commentary on the eighth commandment, is well known.

An eccentric man likes the notoriety which proceeds from a public discussion of his absurdities; he is therefore well pleased when thus opposed; and even if he is a little persecuted, it is better for him still. A bad eminence has much greater charms for him, than a just level. No absurdity is too great, provided the author can find followers or opposers enough to bring him into notice.

"To reign is worth ambition, though in hell;
Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven."

It is believed that a great proportion of the absurdities, which have much currency in the world, owe a very considerable part of their diffusion to the real imprudence of those who see through their fallacy, but have not discretion to determine when it is proper to *cut the knot*.

April 24, 1836.

ZENO.

MORISON'S HYGEIAN PILLS.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—Seeing an account, in one of your late numbers, of the death of a patient from the use of Morison's Hygeinic Pills, I am induced to send you the following notice of them from "*Colton's Four Years in Great Britain*." From the closing observation it is not to be wondered at that numerous individuals have paid for their credulity with their lives. Is it not astonishing, that while the nations on the continent of Europe have suppressed by law the vending or advertising of such patent medicines, Great Britain and the United States, those two enlightened and liberal governments, should patronize them to an extent almost beyond human calculation? The *auri sacrae fames* seems to be here predominant over life itself.

S. W. WILLIAMS.

Deerfield, Mass. March 19, 1836.

"The celebrated empiric, Dr. Morison, pays to the government of Great Britain upwards of 7000 pounds (\$33,600) a year, in the way of tax of *three half pence* on each pill box. His boxes are of two sizes; one retails at a *shilling*, and the other at *sixpence*. Suppose he sells an equal number of boxes, which would make the average per box eight pence; allow for tax, materials and making of the pills, and discount for the trade four pence, the net profit to himself would then be £37,666, or \$180,796 annually! The professional practice of Mr. Brodie, Saville Street, serjeant surgeon to the king, has been stated by creditable authority to be £15,000 or \$42,000 a year. In reputation as a surgeon,

Dr. Brodie is only second to Sir Astley Cooper. How much more profitable is empiricism than science and art, and some of the greatest fortunes in Europe have been made by the manufacture of boot blacking. What a quantity must have been sold in London to afford an advertising bill for Warren's blacking of £250,000, or 1,200,000 dollars, annually. Yet such is the fact.

"Sir John Long's recipe was left sealed by him, price ten thousand pounds, not being opened before bought. It has been taken on the terms of his will ;—a pig in the poke.

"It has been ascertained that the careless and imperfect mixing of the ingredients of Morison's pills, often leaves the powerful agents in one part of the mess, before it is made into pills, which kills those who happen to have a box of that portion—while the rest may be swallowed with as much impunity as so many bits of dough from the kneading trough."

[In connection with the preceding from our correspondent, we beg leave to present the following remarks by Dr. Johnson, editor of the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*.]

Scarcely a day passes without instances occurring of a serious mischief from the preposterous use or abuse of this quack medicine! These events, however, make but a very trifling and local impression on the few who become acquainted with the facts of the case. It is only when a judicial inquiry takes place, and the attention of the public is attracted to the subject, that much check is given to the suicidal consumption of the nostrum in question. We have good reason to believe that the manufacture of "Morison's pills" has experienced a considerable diminution by the late inquest and trial at Manchester. We are disposed to think that a blow of no small force has, still more recently, been given to the preposterous manifestos of the Hygeist, by the inquest in Clarence Gardens.

There can be no doubt that this verdict was correct. Not that we suppose there is any ingredient in this nostrum of a poisonous nature; but that the venal recommendation to employ the pills in all diseases, leads to such an indiscriminate ingurgitation of them, that a certain *percentage* of death must be the inevitable result.

Here lies the great moral responsibility! What a self-immolated host of victims must greet the Hygeist on the banks of the Styx, and deafen old Charon himself, while wafting the affrighted ghost to the regions of Tartarus! Poor Mr. M'Kerrell narrowly escaped a verdict of *FELON-DE-SE*, for taking Prussic acid; and yet thousands of infatuated people, in this country, are not considered insane, although they swallow quack medicines which are as certainly fatal as, though far more painful in operation than, *PRUSSIC ACID*!

"Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat."

The verdicts on such occasions, ought, strictly speaking, to be—"Suicide committed during temporary insanity respecting Morison's pills."

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 BOSTON, MAY 4, 1836.

HARLAN'S MEDICAL AND PHYSICAL RESEARCHES.

A LARGE octavo has been lying before us several weeks, the production of Richard Harlan, M.D. of Philadelphia, a gentleman whose industry in the pursuits of science has become proverbial. A considerable part of the volume is made up of a series of papers upon various subjects, which appear to have been written from time to time, as circumstances, and the author's inclination to investigate particular domains of natural history, permitted. Although those inquiries which are strictly medical, discover a devotedness to the profession and an ardent love for the advancement of the true principles of medical philosophy, the strength of Dr. Harlan's mind has evidently been exerted in that great field in which Cuvier laid the deep foundations of his fame. A mere examination of the plates, unaccompanied by explanations, would exhibit sufficient evidence to show that the man who could establish order in the chaos of fossil American bones of extinct races of animals, whose perishing remains are but defaced fragments, is competent to conduct the highest order of inquiries in that interesting department. The accuracy with which several anatomical examinations were conducted, in the dissection of ourang outangs, and the new and often striking remarks which are interspersed through the text, are testimonials of sufficient strength to convince the reader that Dr. Harlan leaves no opportunity unimproved to register the facts he has discovered for the benefit of those pursuing a similar course of studies. Were it our purpose expressly to review this finely executed volume, its defects would necessarily require a distinct examination; but not wishing to find fault with what could not be bettered at our hands, nor essentially altered by any ingenuity which might be brought to bear upon it, we are happy to say that, as a whole, it is creditable to the literary and scientific accuracy of the author. As a reference, future naturalists will be obliged to consult it, and the libraries of physicians would be permanently enriched by its possession.

Book-making has become a trade, perfectly understood in all its details: but the business of incorporating common sense, truth and useful knowledge, requires something more than an ordinary mind. Nothing like compilation is discoverable here. In the first place, careful observations have been carefully arranged, and have a nobler purpose in view than to enlarge the length, breadth and diameter of the learned writer's money-drawer. That he may not be actually discouraged, and wholly refuse, at a future time, to continue those researches which are so eminently calculated to raise the character of American naturalists, the present edition should be extensively patronized. All public libraries, certainly, should receive a copy. But these are only preliminary observations, to be followed at another day by specific examinations of the prominent articles referred to in the index.

MEDICAL WITNESSES.

SINCE reading a debate before the House of Commons, which took place on the 1st of March, upon the inadequacy of the compensation allowed medical witnesses, we have come to the conclusion that a reform is quite as much needed here, in that respect, as in England. A professional man's testimony, under certain circumstances, is imperatively necessary—and yet the law metes out a fee that falls entirely below the worth of his time. A whole day's labor, critical analyses, and written opinions, by which a jury could be exclusively guided, are paid for most niggardly, if at all. A stupid dolt, who cannot answer a plain question, understandingly, gets just as much for the use of his ignorance before an inquest, or a court of judicature, as would Dr. Physick or Sir Astley Cooper. This is the second effort we have made to rouse physicians to a sense of their rights. If they do not assert and maintain them, no one else will. Massachusetts is not the only place where professional learning is sold by the lump, in cases of immense importance, involving the life of a fellow being; other States are equally remiss in sustaining and patronizing scientific acquirements, when the Commonwealth requires their aid. Instances without number might be collected, to show that an active practitioner has been kept, day after day, dancing attendance on a county court, to the total neglect of all other business—for which he could obtain but one dollar and twenty-five cents a day. This is a sacrifice altogether abominable, which might have a remedy. Why would it not be wise to begin to collect names for a petition, in season for the next legislature, expressly praying for a modification of the present law, that they might draw from the treasury an equivalent for their time and services?

BRANDETH'S PILLS.

IN the course of a leisure walk, the other day, through Spruce Street, New York, we were transfixed at the sight of a mammoth sign, running nearly the whole broad side of a neat little brick edifice, bearing the following words, in equally disproportionate size—"Dr. Brandeth's Central City Office for the sale of his grandfather's Vegetable Universal Pills:—price 25 cents. No. 1, Spruce Street. Where the branches of this nucleus of medical imposition were located, the directory does not particularize. While copying the inscription, a tall, gaunt tatterdemalion, whose very expression showed that he was the victim of knaves, came out of the premises. Between quacks and bar-keepers, he had doubtless parted with both money and health. As he graduated his steps from the threshold, there was plainly to be seen, in one hand, a box—probably direct from the vegetable laboratory of Dr. Brandeth's grandfather. How mankind can be so constantly imposed upon, is one of the most unaccountable things in nature. Adventurers from Europe, of the very lowest grade, who could never have been trusted in a gentleman's kitchen at home, are thriving in all the principal cities of the United States, by the sale of quack medicines, with more certainty of success than the most eminent merchants. They seem to have ascertained the gullible character of the people, and reap an immense profit by imposing upon them. Their pills, like rifle bullets, are sure to do execution. It is really a matter of surprise that the municipal authorities of New York do not license the ignorant pretenders to physic:—the revenues from that source would equal

the tax on auctioneers. At this time, in Boston, beside Thomsonian steam mills for equalizing the population, there are pill-sellers, the successors of Mrs. Motte (the gifted lady of shampooing memory), seventh sons, ninth female, veiled faces, and numerous other pretenders, all devoted to the philanthropic business of prolonging human life, for which they only demand the last dollar their devoted, humble, stupid followers, can raise. But the trade of quacking, in all its ramifications, flourishes with undiminished emolument. New York only excels Boston in this particular department of trade, in the magnitude of its operations, the unblushing effrontery of its quacks, and the boldness with which they obtrude themselves into streets that were formerly respectable. They shall have W. directly, the last imported knave, who makes winding stairs of quarto bibles to wend himself into notoriety.

Dignified Consistency.—The governors of the London Fever Hospital—an institution of high reputation—at a special meeting, a few weeks ago, at which four hundred persons were present, removed Mr. Hentsch, the house surgeon, from his office, in consequence of his having given a written testimonial in favor of a quack medicine. A resolution was brought forward, also, to remove Mr. Tweedie from the post of chief surgeon, for a similar offence; but before it was acted upon, the meeting adjourned for one week. Mr. Bransbury Cooper was present, and defended his professional brethren with considerable energy, but to no purpose. The further doings will be narrated whenever the intelligence arrives.

Apoplexy during Pregnancy.—The question was discussed at a late meeting of the Westminster Medical Society, whether apoplexy during pregnancy was likely to affect the child, and whether utero-gestation proceeded after an attack. Although one or two cases had occurred in the practice of several members, it was unanimously agreed that apoplexy at such times was extremely rare, and that pregnancy was beneficial to the female predisposed to apoplexy. Dr. Ryan mentioned a case in which the attack was induced by taking 25 drops of laudanum, and, what is of interest in a medico-legal sense, the delivery was accomplished during the state of insensibility.

Antidote for the Poison of the Hygeian Pills.—A correspondent of the London Lancet makes known, for the benefit of those who are guilty of the folly of taking Morison's Pills, a remedy for the distressing vomiting and purging which frequently follow their use, viz. copious draughts of lukewarm water, which will assist the stomach in its attempts to dislodge the poison. Mucilaginous and gelatinous drinks, such as barley-water, linseed tea, mutton and chicken broth, will also mitigate the severity of the purging, and afford some protection to the internal coat of the intestines from the acrid and irritating effects of the gamboge, aloes and colocyath, which are found in the pills.

Smallpox and Vaccination.—Dr. Gregory, physician of the Smallpox and Vaccination hospital, St. Pancras, states in his report that during the

last year 144 persons laboring under smallpox were admitted, who in early life had been vaccinated :—an interval varying from ten to thirty years having elapsed since their vaccination. The whole number of cases in the hospital during the year, was 401 ; of whom 89 died and 312 were restored. Of those previously vaccinated, two-thirds had smallpox in a modified form, wholly devoid of danger, and the mortality in this class of patients hardly amounted to 5 in 100, while the unvaccinated perished in the proportion of 33 to 100.

Purgative Seeds.—At the last meeting of the *London Botanical Society*, Dr. Sigmond made some remarks on the seeds of the *satropha curcas*, samples of which, in their capsules, had been sent to the Society by Mr. Montgomery Martin. These seeds, when ripe and fresh, after being slightly roasted, and infused in spiced wine in doses of two or three, act as gentle evacuants of the bowels ; in larger doses they are strong purgatives, and in still larger they are actively poisonous. The expressed oil acts in a similar way, and two or three drops, added to a dose of castor oil, increase its purgative effect. It has also been recommended as an external application in some cutaneous diseases, particularly in itch and herpetic eruptions, and also in common rheumatism, and, taken internally, it has been found beneficial in dropsy, apoplexy, and obstinate constipation. Some experiments made by Orfila to prove the poisonous effects of the seeds were detailed. The effects seem to depend on the violent inflammation produced, and the sympathetic action of the nervous system. The poisonous effects are more strongly marked when it is introduced into the stomach than when applied to the cellular tissue. It was supposed by Caventon, who performed some experiments on these seeds, that the oil obtained from them was, in every way, similar to the croton oil imported from India. The properties of the two oils are, however, very distinct, though their medicinal effects may, in general respects, agree. Dr. Sigmond thought it possible that the seeds of the *satropha curcas* and the *croton tiglium* were both employed in the preparation of the croton oil, and that this fact might account in some measure for the great variation in strength of that medicinal agent.—*Lancet*.

Medical Miscellany.—A case of aphonia, in a woman aged 22, of 12 months' duration, has been successfully treated in England by the administration of tonics and repeated blistering.—Mr. Wallis has been elected house surgeon to the North London Hospital, by concours.—Dublin College has become so thoroughly rotten, that its doings are a by-word. The conferring of doctorates upon an ass, at Aberdeen, was dignified and appropriate, compared to the selfish buying and selling, sponge-pocketing operations of its medical faculty.—The London Medical Society had their anniversary dinner on the 8th of March, at which Dr. Blicked delivered an oration. Why cannot the Boston Medical Association dine together in May ?—Sketches from the Case-Book, to illustrate the influence of the mind on the body, by R. Fletcher, surgeon, has recently been published in England ; and also, a Treatise on Inflammations, by George Rogerson.—Dr. Beck's Medical Jurisprudence has been republished in England, by Longman & Co. and others ; very compli-

mentary to the author.—Mr. Thompson, a London dentist, has made a discovery in relation to filling teeth, with a substance resembling them—which is introduced without pain. He would do well to send an agent to the United States.—Insanity—its Nature and Causes, and Cure, by W. B. Neville, is announced.—Lectures are now being given at the Assembly Rooms, Poland Street, London, on Animal Magnetism and Homœopathy.—A special meeting of the Counsellors of the Mass. Med. Society will be held at the Athenæum, this day.—A stated meeting of the Censors for the first medical district, will meet at the same place, on the 19th, at 3 P. M. for granting licenses.—Dr. Cobb, Professor of Anatomy in the Ohio Medical College, now lecturing at Bowdoin College, will not remove from Cincinnati, says the Medical Repository.—Dr. Cross, of the same institution, is writing a work on *Materia Medica* and Therapeutics.—Major Morgan Neville, on the 1st inst., received the honorary degree of M.D., and twenty-five medical students received their degrees at the Ohio College, at the same time.—Three cases of smallpox have appeared at Dedham, Mass. The same disease is making sad havoc in North Carolina.—Dr. Andrew Combe, author of the work on physiology applied to health and education, has been appointed physician to the king of Belgium, and has taken up his residence at Brussels.

Dir.—In Newport, R. I. Dr. Alexander P. Moore, aged 32.—At South Reading, Ms. Dr. John Hart, 84.

Woke a number of deaths in Boston for the week ending April 30, 23. Males, 13—Females, 10.

Of consumption, 4—child-bed, 1—teething, 1—infantile, 2—rask, 1—marasmus, 1—old age, 2—intemperance, 1—convulsions, 2—throat disemper, 1—typhous fever, 1—suicide, 1—measles, 1—dropsy on the brain, 1. Stillborn, 3.

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